

CSI REPRINT

**VIETNAM: HISTORY OF THE
BULWARK B2 THEATRE,**

**VOL 5: CONCLUDING THE
30-YEARS WAR**

by Tran Van Tra



**COMBAT
STUDIES
INSTITUTE**

**JOINT PUBLICATIONS RESEARCH
SERVICE**

2 February 1983

Southeast Asia Report

No 1247

Foreign Broadcast Information Service

NOTE

JPRS publications contain information primarily from foreign newspapers, periodicals and books, but also from news agency transmissions and broadcasts. Materials from foreign-language sources are translated; those from English-language sources are transcribed or reprinted, with the original phrasing and characteristics retained.

Headlines, editorial reports, and material enclosed in brackets are supplied by JPRS. Processing indicators such as (Text) or (Excerpt) in the first line of a brief, indicate how the original information was processed. Where no processing indicator is given, the information was summarized or extracted.

Unfamiliar names rendered phonetically or transliterated are enclosed in parentheses. Words or names preceded by a question mark and enclosed in parentheses were not clear in the original but have been supplied as appropriate in context. Other unattributed parenthetical notes within the body of an item originate with the source. Times within items are as given by source.

The contents of this publication in no way represent the policies, views or attitudes of the U. S. Government.

PROCUREMENT OF PUBLICATIONS

JPRS publications may be ordered from the National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Virginia 22161. In ordering, it is recommended that the JPRS number, title, date and author, if applicable, of publication be cited.

Current JPRS publications are announced in Government Reports Announcements issued semi-monthly by the National Technical Information Service, and are listed in the Monthly Catalog of U. S. Government Publications issued by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402.

Indexes to this report (by keyword, author, personal names, title and series) are available through Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, Ohio, 44691

Correspondence pertaining to matters other than procurement may be addressed to Joint Publications Research Service, 1000 North Glebe Road, Arlington, Virginia 22201.

JPRS REPORTS

Japan Report
Korean Affairs Report
Southeast Asia Report
Mongolia Report

Near East/South Asia Report
Sub-Saharan Africa Report
West Europe Report
West Europe Report: Science and Technology
Latin America Report

USSR

Political and Sociological Affairs
Problems of the Far East
Science and Technology Policy
Sociological Studies
Translations from KOMMUNIST
USA: Economics, Politics, Ideology
World Economy and International Relations
Agriculture
Construction and Related Industries
Consumer Goods and Domestic Trade
Economic Affairs
Energy
Human Resources
International Economic Relations
Transportation

Physics and Mathematics
Space
Space Biology and Aerospace Medicine
Military Affairs
Chemistry
Cybernetics, Computers and Automation Technology
Earth Sciences
Electronics and Electrical Engineering
Engineering and Equipment
Machine Tools and Metal-Working Equipment
Life Sciences: Biomedical and Behavioral Sciences
Life Sciences: Effects of Nonionizing Electromagnetic
Radiation
Materials Science and Technology

EASTERN EUROPE

Political, Sociological and Military Affairs
Scientific Affairs

Economic and Industrial Affairs

CHINA

Political, Sociological and Military Affairs
Economic Affairs
Science and Technology

RED FLAG
Agriculture
Plant and Installation Data

WORLDWIDE

Telecommunications Policy, Research and
Development
Nuclear Development and Proliferation

Environmental Quality
Law of the Sea
Epidemiology

FBIS DAILY REPORT

China
Soviet Union
South Asia
Asia and Pacific

Eastern Europe
Western Europe
Latin America
Middle East and Africa

To order, see inside front cover

2 February 1983

SOUTHEAST ASIA REPORT

No. 1247

VIETNAM: HISTORY OF THE BULWARK B2 THEATRE,
VOL 5: CONCLUDING THE 30-YEARS WAR

Ho Chi Minh City KET THUC CUOC CHIEN TRANH 30 NAM in Vietnamese
1982 pp 5-335

[Book by Colonel General Tran Van Tra published by the Van Nghe Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City. Printed at the Joint Printing Plant, Ho Chi Minh City; 10,000 copies printed. Printing completed on 27 March 1982 and submitted for registration on 27 March 1982]

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter One The New Front..... | 6 |
| Chapter Two The Only Path Is That of Revolutionary Violence..... | 30 |
| Chapter Three Punishing the Agreement Violators..... | 48 |
| Chapter Four The Greatest Rainy Season Ever..... | 76 |
| Chapter Five Beginning of a New Phase..... | 105 |
| Chapter Six A Once-in-a-Thousand Years Event: The Spring General Offensive and Uprising..... | 136 |
| Chapter Seven The War-Deciding Strategic Battle: The Historic Ho Chi Minh Campaign..... | 166 |
| Chapter Eight Final Hours of a Regime: The Ho Chi Minh Campaign Wins Total Victory..... | 194 |
| Last Chapter The Municipal Military Management Committee..... | 214 |

INTRODUCTION

[Text] In 1978 the Political General Department of the Vietnam People's Army adopted the policy of having cadres who worked and fought on the battlefields write memoirs about our nation's glorious war against the United States and recommended that I write about the B2 theater during the victorious spring of 1975: "How did the B2 theater carry out the mission assigned it by the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee?" How did it contribute to that glorious spring?"

Along with the other battlefields throughout the nation the B2 theater, in order to fulfill its glorious mission, contributed considerably to our people's great victory. The B2 theater and its people are proud of being part of the heroic Vietnamese fatherland, of the heroic Vietnamese people. Recalling and recording the events that occurred there is an honor and a responsibility of all cadres, enlisted men, and people of B2. I accepted the recommendation.

But I believe that the contributions of B2, one of the key war theaters, were not only its battles, its rice, its routes, and its people who sacrificed their lives, but also things that were much greater and which were valuable strategically and with regard to organizational art, and which by actually furthering the process of victory in the war contributed to the policies and lines of the Central Committee. They included not only heroic victories but also temporary, bitter defeats in certain places and at certain times, for they were all true and were valuable experiences. They are musical notes which are indispensable to composing the heroic symphony of the area. Therefore, to only record some events of the final victory, although it was a very great victory, would be a major deficiency. In order to create a bright spring it is necessary to pass through a gloomy winter, and a victorious dry season can be based only on the rainy season of the preceding year. It is difficult to speak of the foliage without speaking of the roots, and to do so would be inaccurate.

Therefore, I decided to record what I knew and remembered of the B2 theater throughout the long anti-U.S. resistance war. That was not a simple matter, so it was necessary to spend a good deal of time thinking, seeking documents, meeting with cadres I once knew, and returning to the battlefields of the past, in order to find the truth, which changes very faithfully. It was necessary to request many comrades to lend their assistance and cooperation, and to add together the memories of many comrades holding many positions in many areas of the theater. But I was determined to succeed in that project, for I regarded it as my final responsibility toward the liberation war--one which I could not delegate to others--and toward B2, an area which I love and in which I lived and served for most of my life, from the days of secret political activity prior to the August Revolution to the complete victory which unified the fatherland, and which I may select as my final resting place.

I have divided my book into five parts:

Part 1: From the Geneva Agreements in 1954 to the simultaneous uprising movement in 1960.

Part 2: From 1961 to 1965, the period of effective resistance to the special war.

Part 3: From 1965 to 1968--the defeat of the U.S. limited war.

Part 4: From 1969 to 1973, opposing the Vietnamization of the war and chasing the U.S. troops from Vietnam.

Part 5: From the Paris Agreement of 1973 to the complete victory (1973-1975).

I begin by writing about the final strategic phase (Part 5), a phase that is still current because it is appropriate to the requirements of many people, especially the men of B2.

But what was B2? Perhaps even now there are many people who are not very clear about that. To help the reader better understand the events about which I have written, I believe that it is necessary to mention some of the features of the B2 theater.

"B2" was the code name of the land and people in the southernmost part of the homeland during the anti-U.S. war period. Vietnam south of the 17th Parallel was divided into four theaters. B1, usually called Zone 5, included the central coastal provinces from Quang Nam-Da Nang to the present Phu Khanh Province. B3, the Central Highlands region, consisted of the provinces of Gia Lai, Kontum, and Dac Lac. B4 was made up of Quang Tri Province and the former Thua Thien Province. B2 consisted of the rest of South Vietnam, from the former Gia Nghia Province (part of the present Dac Lac Province), Lam Dong, Thuan Hai, and on down to the Ca Mau Peninsula, Con Son, Ha Tien, and Phu Quoc. It included a vast jungle-and-mountains area, the tail of the great Truong Son mountain range. From mountain peaks north of Dalat and Lam Dong 1,500 to 2,000 meters high, the elevation gradually declines in the direction of eastern Nam Bo. Bordering that area is the vast, fertile, highly populated lowland area of the Mekong Delta, the location of such famous resistance war bases of the past and the U Minh forest, Dong Thap Muoi, etc. It is a flat, open, humid area with rice paddies alternating with gardens and hamlets and is intersected by such large rivers as the Dong Nai, Soai Rap, Vam Co, and Cuu Long, and a large number of small rivers, canals, and arroyos. Some areas are inundated practically the year round, or are wet 6 months and dry 6 months. In some places there is a shortage of fresh water the year round. A coast thousands of kilometers long, a vast continental shelf rich in natural resources, and such major seaports and river ports as Vung Tau, Saigon, My Tho, Can Tho, Rach Gia, etc., are advantages for aggressors coming from the sea. The road network in Nam Bo, the most highly developed in South Vietnam, was improved by the Americans to support their mechanized operations. Saigon, the capital of the lackey puppet administration, the largest city--at one time it had a population of 4 million--and the political, military, and economic center of South Vietnam, was situated in the center of the B2 theater and, along with many other large cities such as Da Lat, Phan Thiet, Bien Hoa, Tay Ninh, My Tho, Vinh Long, Can Tho, Ca Mau, and Rach Gia, formed a system of bases from which the U.S.-puppet operations were launched in all directions. It was also the center for the application of the neocolonial policy, a place where

the debauched American lifestyle flourished, and a place which consumed American goods and served the large expeditionary armies and the lackey forces. The United States and its puppets organized South Vietnam into four tactical zones. The area south of the Ben Hai River was Military Region I and the Mekong Delta corresponded to Military Region IV. Saigon, situated in the middle of Military Region III, was organized into the Capital Special Zone and was the command headquarters and the center of the U.S.-puppet war apparatus.

Our B2 theater accounted for about half of the land and about two-thirds of the population of South Vietnam, and encompassed part of the enemy's Military Region II and all of their military regions II and IV.

To facilitate guidance and command in the extremely fierce warfare, we divided the B2 theater into Military Region 6 (the southernmost part of Trung Bo [Central Vietnam]), Military Region 7 (eastern Nam Bo), Military Region 8 (central Nam Bo), and Military Region 9 (western Nam Bo and Saigon-Gia Dinh).*

It must be added that about three-fourths of the border between our country and Kampuchea lay within the B2 theater. That area included land routes and river routes connecting the two countries, such as national routes 1, 22, and 13, the Mekong and So Thuong rivers, the Vinh Te Canal, and other roads and small rivers. The people of the two countries had always had good relations with each other in work and business. Friends, relatives, etc., usually experienced no problems in crossing the border by road, river, or canal. The destinies of the people on the two sides of the border have always been closely bound together and have fought shoulder-to-shoulder for the common well-being and shared good times and bad. That angered the enemy, who expanded their aggression and tried to sink their talons into both countries.

The people of B2 are honest and loyal and are independent in nature and their deeply patriotic ancestors came from north and central Vietnam. They always think of our beloved Uncle Ho and Hanoi, the capital and the ancient Thang Long, with an immortal sentiment:

*The military regions encompassed the following provinces:

Military Region 6: Quang Duc (Gia Nghia), Tuyen Duc (Da Lat), Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Lam Dong, and Binh Tuy.

Military Region 7: Phuoc Long, Long Khanh, Phuoc Tuy (Ba Ria), Binh Long, Binh Duong (Thu Dau Mot), Bien Hoa, Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia.

Military Region 8: Long An (Tan An), Kien Tuong (Moc Hoa), Kien Phong (Sa Dec), Dinh Tuong (My Tho), Go Cong, and Kien Hoa (Ben Tre).

Military Region 9: Chau Doc, An Giang (Long Xuyen), Vinh Long, Vinh Binh (Tra Vinh), Phong Dinh (Can Tho), Ba Xuyen (Soc Trang), Kien Giang (Ha Tien-Rach Gia), Chuong Thien (Bad Lieu), and An Xuyen (Ca Mau).

Saigon-Gia Dinh Special Zone

"From the time we used swords to expand the nation we have for a thousand years remembered Thang Long" (Poem by Huynh Van Nghe, a military commander in Nam Bo during the anti-French resistance war).

The people of B2 are proud of their indomitable national-salvation, revolutionary traditions of the past, such as the anti-French movements of Nguyen Trung Truc, Thien Ho Duong, Doc Binh Kieu, Thu Khoa Huan, and Truong Dinh, of the staunch patriotic spirit of Nguyen Dinh Chieu, etc., with the "clusters of leaves that hide the sky," Can Giuoc, and Go Cong, the "Eighteen Hamlets of Vuon Trau," Hoc Mon, Ba Diem, etc. B2 still cherishes the celebrated feats of arms of the cloth-shirted Nguyen Hue on the Rach Gam River, and still has fond memories of our wise leader Ho Chi Minh who led the way to national salvation, and lived in Phan Thiet City, Ben Nha Rong, etc. Then there was the blood shed by our predecessors in the Nam Ky uprising in 1940, the August Revolution in 1945, etc. All of those things continually reminded and encouraged the people of B2 to be prepared to arise, once they had awakened, and sacrifice everything for independence and freedom.

In writing these thoughts and memories, I hope only to fulfill the obligations of a soldier who was fortunate enough to have lived and operated in a glorious era of the fatherland and of the people, and above all his obligation toward B2 or, more accurately, toward the people of B2, whom I love, all the people in the cities and in the rural areas, living scattered about the jungles, the mountains, and the maquis or concentrated in the subwards and villages. Especially, toward my friends, relatives, comrades, and fellow unit members, people I knew as well as those I didn't know, who were from all over the country, from Lang Son to the Ca Mau Peninsula, who fell in the B2 theater and whose blood stained every inch of the B2 theater so that we could win independence and freedom, and who sacrificed everything so that the North and South could be united and work together in building socialism. They were people who had great merit toward the great recent victory of our people and the homeland. Only they, people who never thought of themselves and contributed their entire lives, are worthy of living in the memories of thousands of future generations. That very sacred mission, which is also an order of history and the people, is to faithfully record and correctly evaluate the developments and events, and the hardships and noble sacrifices of the land and people of B2 which I witnessed, know about, and still remember.

Of course, because my knowledge and writing ability are limited, and because an article or book can only concentrate on a certain number of matters, I unfortunately could not deal with all of the miraculous accomplishments of the Vietnamese in the B2 theater, who resolutely, heroically, and creatively responded to the skilled leadership and guidance of the party Central Committee throughout the long and glorious resistance war and contributed their effort and skill to the historic resistance war. I only hope to record some of those events within the limits of my understanding, in order to make a small contribution to the people who are still alive today and to those of future generations. To do so is also to make a small payment on the debt I owe to the people who gave their lives in the B2 theater for their nation and class.

Because of that heavy responsibility, I decided to write only the complete truth, the truth that everyone knows as well as the truth some people do not yet know, which some people like and other people do not like. History is always truthful and will mercilessly eliminate what is not true, if not today then tomorrow. I hope that the readers everywhere, especially those who operated in the B2 theater, will contribute opinions and supplement the deficiencies and the omissions. I will be very pleased and grateful.

I also would like to express my gratitude for my comrades and friends who encouraged and assisted me, and who have contributed very valuable opinions and cooperated in all regards.

I would like to thank the comrades in the war recapitulation sections of the Ministry of National Defense, Military Region 7, Military Region 9, and Ho Chi Minh City, and the comrades who were members of the provincial unit commands in B2. My special thanks go to comrades Senior Colonel Nguyen Viet Ta and Captain Vo Tran Nha, who devoted much effort to assembling documents and contacting the localities, and who contributed worthily to the contents of this book.

Spring, 1980